



## In this issue

Cain decision  
reversed  
—page 8



Marquette 1960s

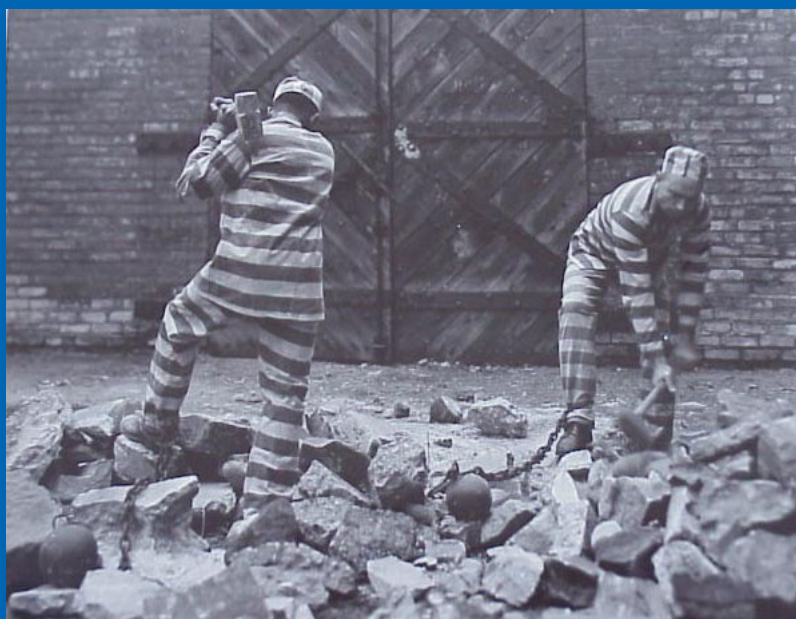
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*“Expecting Excellence Every Day”*

## A news bulletin for employees of the Michigan Department of Corrections

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*Life in the 1800s was hard for inmates at the old Jackson prison.  
The ball and chain was riveted around a prisoner's ankle.*

*Photos in this issue are Courtesy State Archives of Michigan.*

## Michigan Department of Corrections turns 50

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Department of Corrections as we know it today. It was established in 1953 by a legislative change that propelled the department into a new era of prison administration. Gus Harrison filled the first post of Director of the newly designed department.

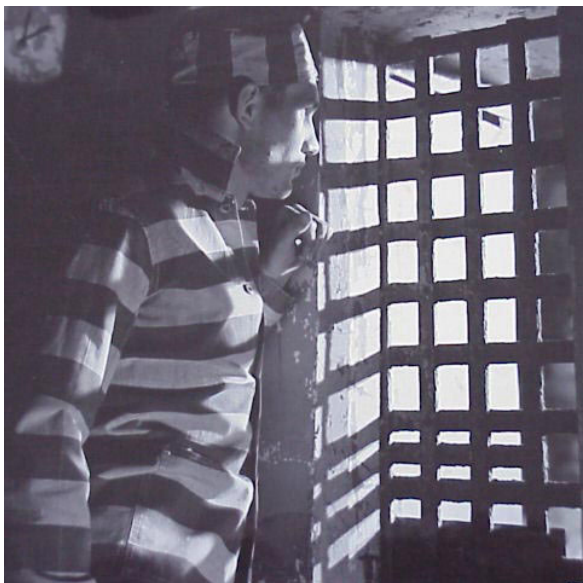
The prison structure has undergone tremendous changes in those 50 years, not only in size and treatment of inmates, but in administration and prison policies. It has undergone even greater transformations since its inception in the 1800s. The current department of corrections maintains little resemblance to that early system.

This story is the first in a series of historical perspectives on the corrections system and its evolution from an often corrupt political patronage arrangement to the development of the current professional corrections system.

*continued on page 2*

## DOC turns 50 *continued from page 1*

January 9, 2003



*Early Jackson Prison inmate*

The penitentiary was largely an American invention of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In early times, public humiliation was the sentence for criminal offenses. The guilty were sentenced to the stockade in the town square.

In the southern states, chain gangs provided a rich income for both the state and the private businessmen who bought the inmate labor for use in their private industries.

On road crews inmates were chained together to work on private sector industries, living in camps provided by the businessmen paying for their labors. As the harsh conditions of the chain gangs became apparent and as whites infiltrated the largely black inmate population, political leaders were pressured to eliminate the use of prisoners for private gain.

The year was 1837. Michigan had just become a state and the legislature appointed a committee of entrepreneurs to select a site and build a prison. A temporary wooden structure was built on some donated swampland near Jackson. The first prisoner was received in January of 1839 and 35 were committed that first year. The prison housed 37 inmates and a correctional facility has endured in the city of Jackson for more than 164 years.

The prison system boasts a rocky history. In 1842, construction was completed on that first Jackson prison and a stone wall 14 feet high enclosed six acres and a stone cell house containing 82 cells. The prison population had increased to 86.

Prisoners wore black and white striped clothing and chains were attached to iron rings riveted around their ankles.



*Guard at old Jackson Prison*

*continued on page 3*

## DOC turns 50 *continued from page 2*

January 9, 2003



*Ionia Reformatory Automotive shop, 1930s*

Prisoners were subjected to the silent system which prohibited conversation between inmates. It was abolished in 1895, although talking cell-to-cell was still not permitted nor was talking while in quarantine.

The contract system of labor which was an agreement between an outside party and the state for manufacturing goods with prison labor was initiated in 1843. The state furnished the building, men and sometimes power and the contracting firm furnished

machinery, raw material and supervision. For this the contractor paid the prisoners 34 and a half cents per day. Inmates manufactured woolen and cotton goods, carpeting, farming tools, steam engines, barrels, shoes and

furniture among other things.

In 1846, Michigan abolished the death penalty substituting solitary confinement for life. This sparked the need for special housing.

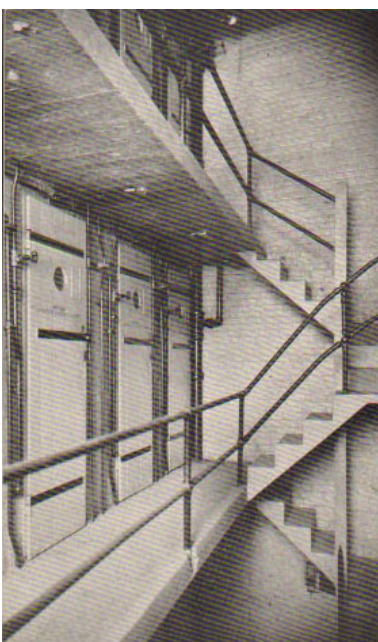
In 1857 the first building designed for solitary was completed. The cells had doors of heavy oak plank, shutting out all light. Ventilation was permitted by five inch openings at the top and bottom of the door. From this time on until 1861 the inmates confined to solitary never left the cells. When it was finally decided to permit these prisoners to work, nine of the twenty men were found to be insane. For many years afterwards this block was used for the confinement of mentally ill prisoners until state hospital wards for the criminally insane were opened in 1885.

By 1848 the prison population was 119 and by 1854, it had risen to 246. Rules for punishment were brutal and in

*continued on page 4*



*Tailor shop*



*Solitary, Jackson*



# DOC turns 50

continued from page 3

January 9, 2003



*Michigan Reformatory in Ionia*

Prison officials realized that a separate institution was needed for youthful and first time offenders, and in 1877 the State House of Correction at Ionia was opened for the confinement of the younger and less hardened offenders. By March 1929, the institution had a population of 2200. Normal capacity of the prison was 1148 and the over-crowded conditions were reflected in the riot of 1926.

Construction of the State House of Correction and Branch Prison at Marquette was authorized by the 1885 session of the Michigan Legislature with an appropriation of

1855 whipping was allowed by regulation as were use of the ball and chain, shackles and the iron cap. The iron cap was an instrument made of strips of iron fastened over the convict's head. They remained in place day and night until the period of punishment was over.

By the end of the civil war, the prison population had increased to 502. In a period of 30 years, Michigan's first state penal institution had grown from a log structure to an institution capable of housing 700 prisoners.



*Corrections Officers, Michigan Reformatory, Ionia, 1930s*



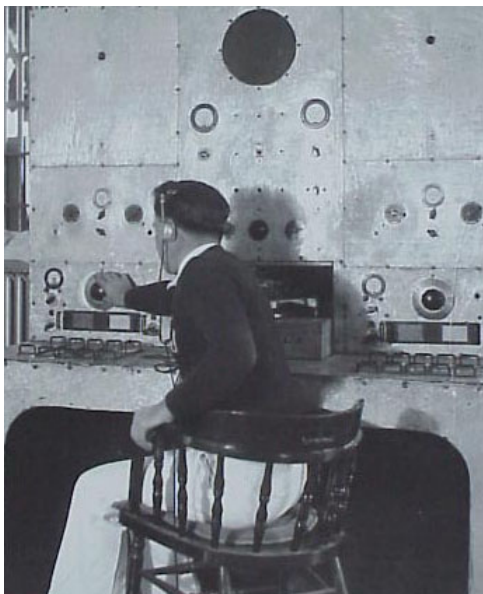
*Michigan Reformatory Inmate Band*

\$150,000. Construction started in 1885. The State Branch Prison at Marquette was opened in June 1889 with a capacity for 325 prisoners and was designed to take care of the overflow population of Jackson and Ionia which in 1885 had a

continued on page 5

# DOC turns 50 *continued from page 4*

January 9, 2003



*Control Center, Marquette Prison  
1930s*

combined population of 1,762 prisoners. After 50 years the prison at Jackson held 800 prisoners.

In 1911 a stockyard was established at one of the farms where meat for the prison was prepared and in 1918 the Jackson prison for the first time began the production of auto license plates and street and road signs. Other developments consisted of a cement plant at Chelsea, the textile plant for the manufacture of cloth for state use and the Prison Annex, which at a later date was to become known as The Michigan State Prison and still later in 1935 as the State Prison of Southern Michigan. The population continued to grow and after a serious riot in 1911, legislators talked of building a new prison. After WWI in 1920, they

finally authorized the preparation

tion of plans for a new prison. Construction began in 1924 and the new prison was to have the dubious honor of being the largest walled institution in the world. Due to the rapid increase of prison population, plans were changed to accommodate 5180 inmates from the original 1500. The inmates no longer wore stripes and certain barbarous modes of discipline had been abolished by law.



*Inmates at State House of Correction  
and Branch Prison, Marquette, 1800s*



*Inmates fill silos on the prison farm, Jackson.*

With the completion of the new prison, the education system expanded. Employment of inmates also increased. The old prison was officially closed in 1934.

Almost from the beginning, corrections officials knew that the huge facility was a mistake. With more than

*continued on page 6*



# DOC turns 50 *continued from page 5*

January 9, 2003



*January 1939 Custodial Force Officers  
State Prison of Southern Michigan*

6,000 prisoners on 56 acres, the largest part called Central Complex was referred to by both inmates and staff as “inside the walls.” The facility allowed a large number of inmates to congregate at one time and it was too big to control. The Big Top, as the cafeteria area was known, was rife with violence. The largest section of the prison, the maximum security unit, housed more than 3,000 people. The eight huge square cellblocks had five tiers with 600 cells apiece. Fifteen block, known as “the hole” was used for punitive segregation.

It played a key role in the 1952 riot and was later demolished.

The 1930s brought the depression and as a result, changes in the prison system. In 1936, the governor appointed a study committee which examined the entire prison system of Michigan and wrote the Reform Act of 1937. A Department of Corrections was established in 1937.

The 1937 Act established a “professional” Department of Corrections and replaced the old Prison Commission with a Corrections Commission. The department was headed by a director and



*Hospital*

was divided into three bureaus each headed by an assistant director.

A three-member Parole Board replaced the Parole Commissioner. The entire department, with the exception of the commissioners, was placed under civil service.

The first counselors for inmates were hired in 1949. During the 1950s and 1960s many sociologists took up the question of rehabilitation and treatment.

*continued on page 7*

Michigan Department of Corrections



*Dining hall, Jackson Prison*

DOC turns 50 *continued from page 6*

January 9, 2003

In the early 1950s riots swept through penal institutions in 17 states and Michigan was no exception. Uncertainty and upheaval throughout the prison system culminated in the 1952 riot at Jackson. The uprising began in cellblock 15, the maximum security block and lasted for four days. The riot brought to the forefront new philosophies of prison administration and reaffirmed the central foundation of custody within the prison.

In 1953 the corrections law was once again revised and PA 232 of 1953 is largely in effect today. PA 232, known as the Department of Corrections Act, created a state department of corrections, abolished the previous department of corrections and established the Michigan

<b>Comparison</b>	<b>1916</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>Expenditure of State Prisons</b>	<b>\$639,825</b>	<b>\$1.6 billion</b>
<b>Annual maintenance per inmate</b>	<b>\$277</b>	<b>\$28,000</b>
<b>Average total population</b>	<b>2,026</b>	<b>50,000</b>

Corrections Commission (MCC) which consisted of six members appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate. The commission appointed a Director of Corrections.

The most recent change in the administration of the department came with a 1991 Executive Reorganization Order. This law amended PA 232 eliminating the MCC and transferring all power and responsibility of the commission to the Director of the Department of Corrections with the director appointed by the Governor.

With the new emphasis on programming, education programs expanded in 1963. A \$10,000 grant from the McGregor Foundation funded a television studio operated by inmates trained at Wayne State University.

It broadcast education classes to 26 separate locations in the prison. In 1967 a program began that bussed prisoners to Jackson Community College for vocational classes in carpentry and bricklaying. The successful program was soon expanded to include other vocation subjects and academic topics. A work-pass program followed, in which inmates worked outside on day-time jobs and returned to the prison at night.

Like the rest of the country, prisons had to deal with the racial unrest of the 60s. Militant groups such as the Black Panthers were actively organizing in the prisons.

*continued on page 8*

## Cain decision reversed



The Michigan Court of Appeals unanimously reversed two orders requiring the Department of Corrections (DOC) to maintain John Chappell Cain's attorneys, Prison Legal Services of Michigan, Inc. (PLSM), in an office inside the Egeler Correctional Facility and requiring the MDOC to maintain 12 general population prisoners as PLSM workers in that same office.

Cain, who is serving a 45-to-100-year sentence for a second degree murder conviction, filed a class action lawsuit which has been in the courts for eight years. The case centered on the control of the type and amount of property inmates are permitted, prisoners' access to courts and the prisoner classification system.

The December 27, 2002 ruling overturned Ingham County Circuit Judge James Giddings decision to allow PLSM to remain at Egeler. The ruling is effective after January 17, 2003 unless delayed by a motion for rehearing or Plaintiffs' appeal.

The Appeals Court stated that the Plaintiffs have no protected interest in having their attorneys located inside a prison especially when balanced against the MDOC's legitimate interest in managing its facilities. The prisoners also have no right to be housed in a particular prison or a particular wing of a prison.

In a related ruling earlier in the year, the Court of Appeals ordered PLSM's offices out of the Jackson facility which previously housed Cain.

## DOC turns 50 *continued from page 7*

In 1977, the department began the task of dividing the Jackson prison to make it more manageable. Currently, the Jackson facilities include five separate prisons although they are adjacent or in close proximity to one another. Four facilities are in operation at this time including the newly remodeled Charles Egeler Reception and Guidance Center (RGC) which opened in July 2002. A fifth facility, Jackson Maximum Correctional Facility, is expected to re-open sometime in 2003.

As prison populations grew so did the need for additional prisons. The Michigan Department of Corrections now has 42 facilities operating across the state along with 10 camps. Prison population projections estimate that the department will be at full capacity in mid to late 2003.



*Marquette pre 1930s*